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pottery is of the regular Mycenæan type, known from other sites than Crete. Its essential features are like those of the preceding periods, but the designs have become stereotyped and lifeless. Technically, however, they stand very high, for never before did Cretan potters succeed in producing such well-sifted, hard clay and such beautiful lustrous glaze. A few vases from Gournia in this Museum are of this period (fig. 15), but the style is best illustrated in the collection of Mycenæan vases from Cyprus in the Cesnola Gallery and the other Mycenæan vases in Gallery 40 B.

If we are to judge of Cretan pottery as a whole, we are struck with the high standard it attained as regards both form and decoration; and its originality in this respect will be readily understood if we compare it with contemporary Egyptian pottery, which until the XVIII dynasty is mostly crude and uninteresting in comparison. Indeed, in pure decorative instinct the Cretan products may be called superior even to the classical Greek pottery of later times. For, however much we may admire the Athenian red-figured and black-figured ware, we must admit that, from the point of view of the effect of the vase as a whole, the decorative motives evolved by the Cretans are more appropriate ornaments than the scenes of men and women employed by the Athenians.

G. M. A. R.

PERSIAN MINIATURES

THE similarity which seems to exist, at least to the lay mind, between the art of the Near and the Far East, between that of Persia on the one hand and that of China and Japan on the other, is a similarity more apparent than real and lies chiefly in certain outward conventions common to both. The chief of these conventions is the flat and deliberately unrealistic mode in which all Eastern art expresses itself, and a second, almost as important, is the close relation between all Oriental calligraphy and the more purely decorative and pictorial arts.

The Eastern artist, who enhances line and flat tone at the expense of realism, is in direct contrast to the typical European, who thinks of the objects he wishes to represent as actually existing in light and space and endeavors by plastic modeling and varied color to give them as



POLO GAME
FROM MANUSCRIPT ILLUSTRATED
BY BEHZAD, 1487-1493

great a sense of reality and tangibility as possible. For this reason the East, and particularly the Near East, is superior to the West in all the more purely ornamental and decorative arts, where from the very nature of the material a flat surface is one of the first requisites of success, as for instance, in rug weaving, inlaid work, carving in low relief, and related forms. Aside from such widespread conventions as are mentioned above, there is no more in common between the art of Persia and that of China and Japan than there is between that of two widely separated countries in Europe, and the importance of Chinese influence on

Persia, of which we frequently find traces in such common motives as the dragon, phoenix, and cloud bands, has been very much exaggerated in the past.

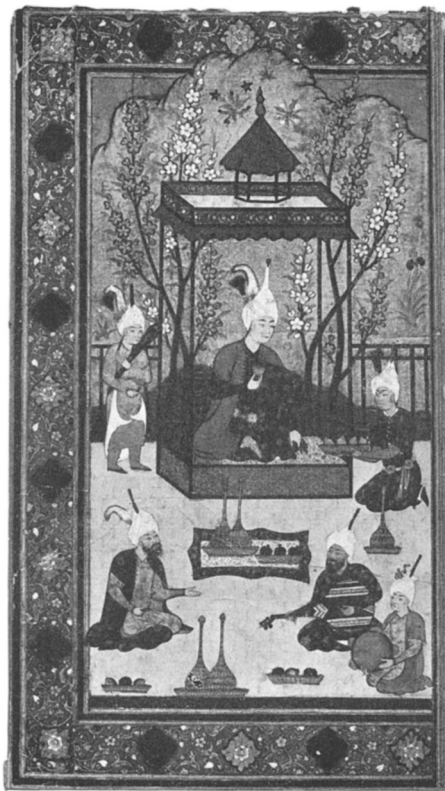
The miniatures with which the Persians illustrated their elaborate and wonderful manuscripts correspond in importance to the panel and wall paintings of Europe and the kakemonos and makemonos of Japan and China. Such miniatures are the only form of Near Eastern art in which the personality of the artist is in evidence, and even here it is far fainter than in European painting, the Eastern workman being restricted by the more purely ornamental purpose of his work. The Persian art was animated by motives quite different from those of Chinese art; the former illuminates and illustrates not religious ideas, as does the latter, but works of poetry and history, especially the great monuments of Persian literature of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the age of Firdusi, Omar Khayam, Sadi, and Hafiz. It was forbidden to adorn the Koran with representations of any living thing, and consequently the artist was obliged to ornament the religious writings with conventional designs only and to confine his pictorial work to secular books. The same law which forbade the use of human figures and animals in the illumination of the Koran was construed by a large sect of Mohammedans to mean

that no representation of a living thing could ever be lawful in art. The more orthodox Sumites, to which branch of the Mohammedan faith the Turks belonged, held this view, but the Shiits, among whom were the Persians and Indians, took the more liberal interpretation and as a result

produced those miniature paintings which are to-day so highly valued. On the other hand, the representation of human beings and animals was excluded from Turkish art and a purely ornamental decoration took its place, a convention which corresponded well, however, with the Turk's natural predilection for geometric forms. This native tendency of the Turks toward formal design is shown by their transformation of realistic plant and animal motives borrowed from Persia into stiff and highly conventionalized designs, balanced, geometric, and un-lifelike.

Painting in the Near East originated as an Oriental branch of Byzantine-Egyptian art,

itself an outgrowth of late Greek civilization, and wall paintings of the seventh and eighth centuries which have lately been discovered in castles in Syria show a strong similarity to frescoes in Coptic churches in Egypt, proof of the close relationship between the art of the two countries. This Byzantine influence is still strongly in evidence in the book illustration of the first period of an independent



PRINCE AND ATTENDANTS
MINIATURE IN THE MANNER OF BEHZAD
PERSIAN, ABOUT 1500

Persian art, as is shown by the manuscripts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries which originated chiefly in central Mesopotamia, the seat of all Near Eastern culture in the Middle Ages. Similar motives are found in contemporary pottery from Rhages and Veramin, where Byzantine influence is combined with forms borrowed from the Mongols, and the whole transformed into an original style of primitive and heavy character. Thus the human figures represented are always short, small, and distinctly Mongolian in type, but at the same time frequently decorated with nimbuses or halos copied from those of the saints of Byzantine art. With the passage of time the native art became gradually more and more refined until it culminated under the earlier Safavid monarchs in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the period of wonderful silk animal rugs and floreated pottery of brilliant color and delicate lustre. These were days of peace and wealth, wherein the Persian reminded himself of his great past in literature, art, and conquest, and the general pride and optimism of the moment are reflected in the miniatures of the day, their splendor of design and color contrasting strongly with the somberness of contemporary Chinese painting. Here we find scenes from the life of a nation enjoying an easy existence of peace and high culture: love passages in flowery gardens, poets reading before nobles of

court, princes regaled with wine and music, visits to philosophers in the desert, ball games and polo matches, all represented with rich accessories, walls of colored tiles, brightly patterned rugs, costumes splendid with gold, the whole giving the impression of a brilliant luxury. Even the

battle scenes with their bright colors and blue skies do not seem cruel, nor are there evidences of a religion frightening its devotees into virtue by terrible demons or phantastic and grotesque beasts. This is the greatest difference between Persian and Chinese pictures, for in the latter the frequent representation of awful and threatening deities gives the whole art of temple-painting a gloomy and somber character. As the art of the two nations differs in subject, so does it differ in technique; while the Chinese paint with tempera, naturally dull in tone, on a light brown linen, the Persians use bright and lus-

trous gouache colors almost as brilliant as oil paints. In Chinese pictures the plain tone of the background, against which the composition is relieved in a few spots, plays an important part in the general effect, whereas in Persian paintings the ground is completely covered over with elaborate decoration in contrast with which the main figures appear as comparatively empty reserved spaces. The same difference exists between Persian and Chinese rugs; in the former, the ground space is completely filled with brightly

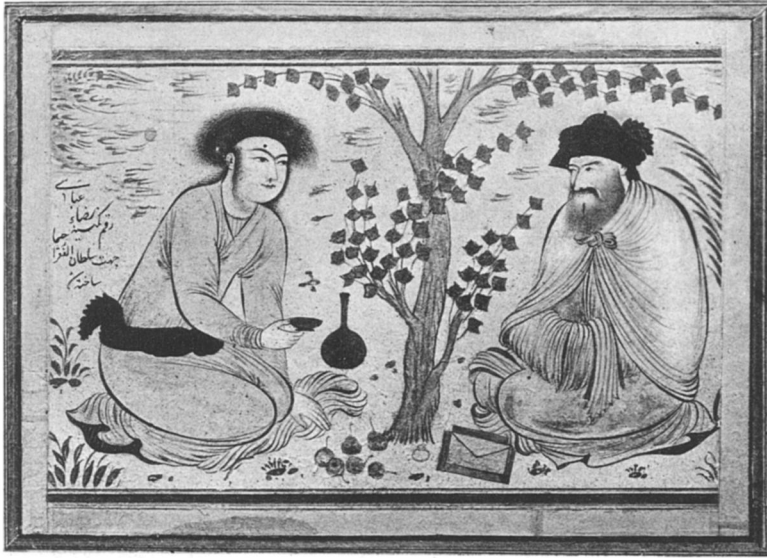


PAGE WITH ILLUMINATED BORDER
FROM A MANUSCRIPT
OF SADI'S "BUSTAN"

colored decoration, while in the latter a few important motives are placed against a plain brownish background.

In the possession of the Museum is an example of the great period of Persian painting in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries — a manuscript book of the

Museum, also in the manner of Behzad, where a prince is shown seated beneath a baldachino receiving wine and fruits from an attendant and listening to a poet who recites to the music of a lute. In such works as these the combination of realistic conception and delicate fancy



PRINCE AND DERVISH
MINIATURE BY RIZA ABBASI, ISPAHAN
ABOUT 1590-1640

Bustan or Tree-Garden, one of the two great masterpieces of Sadi, the famous didactic and epic poet of two hundred years earlier. The manuscript was written at the end of the fifteenth century by Mir Ali, the best calligrapher of the time, and while the name of the artist who painted the five beautiful miniatures in the volume is not given, there can be no doubt that they are very close in style to the signed works of the greatest of Persian painters, Behzad, especially to the manuscript signed by him now in the Louvre and the examples in the possession of Mr. Goloubew, shown in the Munich Exhibition of 1910. No less remarkable than Mir Ali's manuscript-book is a single miniature in the possession of the

with a conventionalized treatment and brilliant color is surely equal in imaginative force and poetry to some gorgeous tale out of the Thousand and One Nights.

Save for occasional whole-page miniatures, the decoration of such manuscripts as these is largely confined to ornamental borders of a more or less formal sort, which appear on each leaf but culminate in the blue and gold splendors of the double frontispiece. The borders surrounding the text are generally done in gold on various tinted paper, as in the Bustan manuscript, and are almost always floreated and conventional in character. The highest development of such borders is found in a number of single pages belonging to the

Museum, from the beginning of the sixteenth century, a portion of a manuscript-book, other sheets of which are in the British Museum and in private possession in Berlin. Here instead of the usual arabesques and flowers similar to those of the so-called Ispahan rugs, more or less mechanically repeated, each page is treated individually, fighting animals are introduced, and what is rarer still, human figures appear, all rendered in a manner no less skilled and spirited than that of the painted illustrations themselves.

The art of miniature painting commences to decline in Persia in the seventeenth century, although at the beginning of this period we still meet with so great an artist as Riza Abbasi. He made use of the broader and more personal technique then coming into vogue where large, complicated, and brightly-colored compositions were replaced by outline drawings

in gray monochrome, generally of single figures and tending strongly toward portraiture. With this inclination toward individualism the art of Persia approaches nearer to that of Europe—one reason why Riza Abbasi is so well understood by European collectors—and by so doing loses most of its original Asiatic character after a short period of compromise. Riza Abbasi lived at the court of Shah Abbas the Great and was calligrapher as well as artist. His Prince and Dervish, a drawing owned by the Museum, shows very clearly the beauty of his calligraphic style and his cleverness in characterization, the different types of the worldly prince who enjoys wine and the wise philosopher who puts aside the pleasures of life with a sarcastic smile, each being perfectly portrayed with an art which, if declining, had a great tradition behind it and a perfect mastery over technical form.

W. R. V.

NOTES

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CORPORATION

THE forty-second Annual Meeting of the Members of the Corporation of the Museum will be held in the Board Room on Monday, February 19, at four-thirty o'clock, P. M.

A report will be presented by the Trustees of the transactions during the year 1911. Tea will be served by a committee of ladies, and an opportunity will be given for the inspection of the various departments of the museum under the guidance of the curators, who will point out the more recent acquisitions, and the new arrangement of some of the collections.

THE LIBRARY.—The additions to the Library during December, 1911, were one hundred and forty-six volumes:

By purchase 48

By gift 98

The names of the donors are Mr. Edwin AtLee Barber, Mr. Martin Birn-

baum, Mr. John H. Buck, Mr. Jacques Doucet, Mr. Charles L. Freer, Mr. Walter Gay, Mr. George A. Hearn, Mr. Michelangelo Jesurum, Miss Isabel Ely Lord, Messrs. F. Muller & Company, Mr. P. F. Schofield, and Mr. Don C. Seitz.

The attendance during the month was six hundred and sixty-five.

SHEFFIELD PLATE*. — We have recently purchased some interesting early pieces of this ware. There are three snuff boxes, chased, about the middle of the eighteenth century. These are plated on one side only and might have been made by Thomas Balsover or Joseph Hancock. Then we have six muffineers, pierced and engraved, late eighteenth century. These are like the former pieces, plated on one side only. A cake-basket, boat-shaped, of wire, with jointed handle, and bearing in the center the arms of Clermont, has been added. This, also, belongs to the late eighteenth century, as well as the dish ring made of beaded wire.

*See Bulletin, Vol. V, p. 101.

J. H. B.